

Application Number 09/876,432
Response to Office Action mailed August 14, 2007

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method of collecting information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

providing a database to store information collected from the RFID tags, wherein the database specifies at least one category for the items of interest.

(a) — selecting one of the categories for the a category of items from the database using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;

(b) — after selecting the category, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain collect information associated with the item of interest, wherein the information collected from the tag item of interest is not currently associated with the category by the database selected in step (a); and

(c) — thereafter, updating the database with the RFID reader to associating store the information collected obtained from the RFID tag in step (b) and associate the stored information with the selected category selected in step (a); and

(d) — saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 2 (Canceled).

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1, wherein selecting one of the categories step (a) comprises selecting a category from among a list of categories displayed on the user interface.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1, wherein selecting one of the categories step (a) comprises selecting a category and designating the attributes of items in that category to define the category.

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Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the category describes a location where an item was interrogated.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the category describes a class of items.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein categories from which a user may select are uploaded from a data storage device and displayed on the user interface.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least two categories of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting at least two categories, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain information associated with the item of interest, wherein the item of interest is not currently associated with the categories selected in step (a); and
- (c) thereafter using the RFID reader to automatically categorize the information obtained in step (b) with at least one of the categories selected in step (a), and wherein information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be obtained from the RFID tag itself; and
- (d) saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories are mutually exclusive.

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Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein one category describes whether an item is present in a storage area.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories describe different types of items.

Claim 14 (Canceled).

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, further comprising accessing a database stored in memory of the RFID reader to retrieve information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item based on the information obtained from the RFID tag.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of claim 15, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of claim 16, wherein the removable data storage device is a flash memory card.

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Claim 18 (Previously Presented): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least one category of items and specifying one or more attributes associated with the selected category using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;
 - (b) after selecting the category, interrogating RFID tags associated with items using the RFID reader, at least one of which is within the category of items;
 - (c) using the RFID reader, categorizing information related to at least one item(s) associated with the interrogated RFID tag(s) in at least one of the categories for those items having the attributes specified for the selected category; and
 - (d) ignoring any RFID-tagged-item that may not be categorized in any of the categories without listing or categorizing those items that do not have the attributes specified for the selected category,
- wherein in steps (c) and (d) the RFID reader determines which of the RFID-tagged-items may be categorized and which of the RFID-tagged-items may not be categorized in any of the categories.

Claim 19 (Original): The method of claim 18, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (e) saving the categorized information in a database.

Claim 20 (Original): The method of claim 19, wherein at least one category describes items of a certain type.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 19, wherein the RFID reader determines whether to categorize or ignore each RFID-tagged item based on information obtained from the RFID tag itself.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 19, wherein the RFID reader determines whether to categorize or ignore each RFID-tagged item based on information obtained from a database stored in memory of the RFID reader.

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Claim 23 (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 24 (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the removable data storage device is a flash memory card.

Claims 25-38 (Canceled).

Claim 39 (Previously Presented): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item, to obtain information;
- (b) using the information obtained in the interrogation step (a) for performing a primary operation of determining whether the items are in a predetermined order within a physical storage area; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of determining whether the items are in a predetermined order within the storage area in step (b), using the information obtained by the interrogation in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in the storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the storage area.

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Claim 40 (Previously Presented): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item;
- (b) using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a primary operation of searching for certain items on a predetermined search list; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of searching for the certain items in step (b), using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in a physical storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area.

Claim 41 (Previously Presented): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item, to determine information related to the items;
- (b) using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a primary operation of checking items into or out of a physical storage area; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of checking items into or out of a physical storage area in step (b), using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area to update an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area.

Claim 42-44 (Canceled).

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Claim 45 (Previously Presented): A method of reconciling an inventory list of items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) using an RFID reader to interrogate RFID tags each associated with an item;
- (b) determining whether an item represented on the inventory list as being present is among the items whose RFID tags were interrogated, and when the item is not among the items whose RFID tags were interrogated:

- (i) indicating to a user in real time that the inventory list incorrectly indicates that the item is present; and

- (ii) enabling the user to correct the inventory list in real time by confirming that the item is absent using a user interface associated with the RFID reader.

Claim 46 (Original): The method of claim 45, wherein the user interface comprises a display.

Claim 47 (Original): The method of claim 46, wherein the user interface comprises a touch panel display.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented): A method of organizing collected data related to items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) using an RFID reader to interrogate RFID tags, each associated with an item, wherein the items are not currently located at desired locations in a physical storage area, and the items are not currently arranged or interrogated in an order associated with their desired locations in the physical storage area;

- (b) organizing, with the RFID reader, information obtained from the RFID tags in an order in which the items are to be moved from their current locations to their desired locations in the physical storage area; and

- (c) providing the organized information from step (b) to a user.

Claim 49 (Original): The method of claim 48, wherein step (c) comprises providing information to the user on a display of the RFID reader.

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Claims 50-74 (Canceled)

Claim 75 (Previously Presented): A method of collecting information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting a category of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader, wherein a category is a group of items that possess specified attributes and represents a portion of an entire group of items having associated RFID tags;
- (b) after selecting the category, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain information associated with the item of interest, wherein the item of interest is not currently associated with the category selected in step (a);
- (c) thereafter associating the information obtained in step (b) with the category selected in step (a); and
- (d) saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 76 (Currently Amended): A method of using information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting a category of items using a user interface associated with a computer, and designating one or more attributes of items in that category to define the category;
- (b) obtaining a list of at least one RFID-tagged item; and
- (c) automatically associating information related to the at least one item with the selected category using the designated attributes, wherein the information is obtained by interrogating the RFID tag associated with the at least one item.

Claim 77 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 76, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (d) saving the categorized information in a database.

Claim 78 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein step (a) comprises selecting a category from among a list of categories displayed on the user interface.

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Claim 79 (Canceled).

Claim 80 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein the category describes a location where an item was interrogated.

Claim 81 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein the category describes a class of items.

Claim 82 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein categories from which a user may select are uploaded from a data storage device and displayed on the user interface.

Claim 83 (Previously Presented): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least two categories of items using a user interface associated with a computer;
- (b) interrogating an RFID tag associated with at least one RFID-tagged item to obtain information related to the at least one item;
- (c) as a primary operation, categorizing the information related to the at least one item(s) in at least one of the categories; and
- (d) simultaneously with the primary operation of categorizing information in step (c), using the information obtained by the interrogation for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in a storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the storage area.

Claim 84 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 83, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (d) saving the categorized information in the inventory database.

Claim 85 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories are mutually exclusive.

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Claim 86 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Claim 87 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein one category describes whether an item is present in a storage area.

Claim 88 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories describe different types of items.

Claim 89 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be obtained from a database stored in memory of the RFID reader.

Claim 90 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 89, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 91 (Previously Presented): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least one category of items using a user interface associated with a portable RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting the category, interrogating RFID tags associated with items using the portable RFID reader, at least one of which is within the category of items;
- (c) using the portable RFID reader, categorizing information related to the at least one item(s) associated with the interrogated RFID tag(s) in at least one of the categories; and
- (d) using the portable RFID reader, ignoring any RFID-tagged-item that may not be categorized in any of the categories.

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Claim 92 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 91, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (e) saving the categorized information in a database.

Claim 93 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 92, wherein at least one category describes items of a certain type.

Claim 94 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 92, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 95 (Previously Presented): A method of using information related to items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) with a portable RFID reader, obtaining a list of information related to the RFID tags, the list organized in the order in which the RFID tags were interrogated by the portable RFID reader; and
- (b) with the portable RFID reader, organizing the information in an order other than the order in which the tags were interrogated by the portable RFID reader.

Claim 96 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 95, wherein only information related to RFID-tagged items that are out of position by at least a predetermined amount is organized in the order.

Claim 97 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 95, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (c) comparing the organized information from step (b) with a predetermined ordered list.

Claim 98 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the predetermined ordered list is a list of items in an expected order of location in a storage area.

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Claim 99 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

(d) creating a list of items that are on the predetermined ordered list but not among the ordered list from step (b).

Claim 100 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

(d) creating a list of items that are on the ordered list from step (b) but not among the predetermined ordered list.

Claim 101 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein both the ordered list of step (b) and the predetermined ordered list are provided to a computer by the portable RFID reader.

Claim 102 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein both the ordered list of step (b) and the predetermined ordered list are stored on a removable data storage device by the portable RFID reader, and uploaded from the removable data storage device to a computer.